

Implementing a diversity workbook to assess the impact on creating awareness of cultural identities amongst hospitality students

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Introduction

The UK hospitality industry is facing interesting times. The sector's prosperity is supported by the diverse make-up of its people (DeLuca, 2012; Madera, 2011). This competitive stance is reliant on institutions to supply skilled, engaged and well-informed professionals from diverse cultural identities. The detailing of a robust industry which requires inclusivity encourages this project to investigate how diversity can be revitalised through a curriculum.

Aim:
Examine the effectiveness of a diversity workbook when attempting to create a greater awareness of diversity; inclusivity & individuality and food cultures impacting the hospitality industry.

Objective:

Explore how a diversity workbook can generate a higher awareness of inclusivity.

Research Question:

Does completing a diversity workbook support students' understanding of how various food cultures can help to meet customer expectations?

Literature Review

Diversity - The topic of diversity is well documented (Rivera & Lee, 2016; Casado, 2007; Madera, 2011). These studies all draw similarities by using in-class activities to examine how diversity is understood amongst students and the value students place on it. The results of these studies draw similar conclusions associated with students forming rich and open discussions of minority cultures (Madera, 2011; Casado & Dereshiwsky 2007). Rivera & Lee (2016) summarise communication barriers can be improved by such activities provoking healthy discussion. Where these studies contrast is the application of flipped learning activities suggesting completing exercises away from the classroom environment stimulates more confidence to express opinions on a sensitive subject such as diversity (Madera 2011; Laurillard 2012). In response, the viability for diversity exercises to remove barriers to student cohesion suggests a hospitality context provides a fertile platform for discussion to take place.

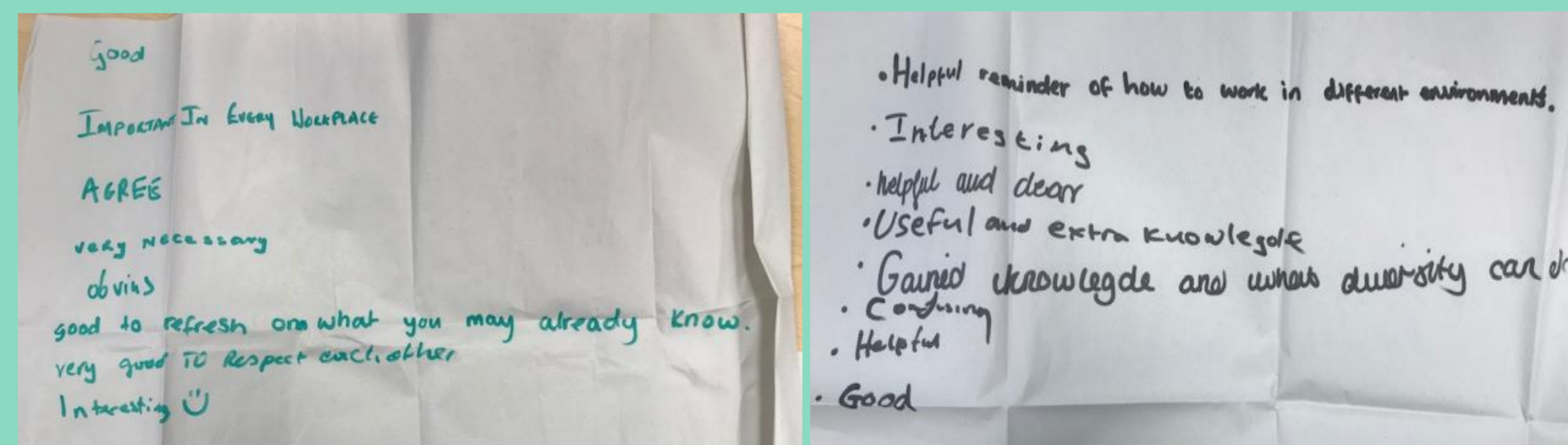
Inclusivity and Individuality - Like diversity, the awareness of respecting inclusivity and individuality has developed considerably (Nelson Laird 2011; Casado & Dereshiwsky 2007; Ritchie 2011). Nelson Laird (2011) and DeLuca (2012) discover how discussions of personal beliefs can encourage higher attendance. Nelson Laird (2011) and Lashley and Barron (2006) explore how these discussions can enable the teacher to understand the students' preferred learning preference. What separates these studies is the ability for inclusivity to be introduced with a dialogical approach to enable group work amongst students which in turn generates fruitful discussion from students with different backgrounds analysing the same topic. This contrasts with a didactic approach commonly established (Petty, 2008; Fry, Ketterbridge & Marshall 2014; Casado & Dereshiwsky 2007). Conflictingly, Ritchie (2011) applies a hospitality context to suggest promoting inclusivity remains challenging in a subject which requires participation when teaching and tasting wine.

Food Culture - Studies by Devine, Baum, Hearn and Devine (2007); Miller, Deutsch and Sealey-Ruiz (2004) and Barron and Watson (2006) discuss how students aspiring to enter professions which involve managing customer facing roles should recognise behaviours and attitudes belonging to diverse cultural identities. Devine *et al.* (2007) examine how customer experiences are enhanced through a student's heightened awareness of each other's backgrounds and beliefs. Miller *et al.* (2004) further address the make-up of the hospitality industry's workforce becoming increasingly globalised; suggesting graduates will need to be equipped with extensive tuition associated with diversity and food culture. Only Barron and Watson (2006) examined the need for institutions to encourage discussions linked with eliminating stereotyping. This is relevant to a hospitality context as globalised food and beverages are perceived as a functional need to the international customer.

Methodology

The research aimed to identify common perspectives from students when aiming to achieve greater awareness of diversity, inclusivity and individuality, and food cultures by completing a workbook. The workbook given to students in their induction week consisted of 8 exercises which aimed to establish their current understanding of diversity and how this differed after completing the exercise. The activity which took place gained reliability by analysing feedback deriving from two classes of level 4 food and beverage operations which is studied on hospitality management degree course. This equalled to 10% of the course cohort. A total of 16 students were involved in the research process. Students were initially asked to brainstorm their thoughts of what diversity means to them. This activity was then followed by students instructed to complete a 14 page workbook related to achieving respect of cultural identities. Upon completion students were then asked to evaluate the effectiveness of the workbook. This exercise in total lasted 30 minutes.

29/01/19 - Food & Beverage Operations Classes - 31/01/19



8 students – 100% positive response

8 students – 90% positive response / 10% confused

Findings

After completing the activity, students from two hospitality management classes were asked “Describe how useful the diversity workbook was when expanding your understanding of diversity, inclusivity and individuality and food cultures?”. The majority of students responded positively with statements such as “helpful”, “gain knowledge” and “good to refresh”. These results coincide with Devine *et al.* (2007) as it appears students recognise the necessity to embrace individuality. Nevertheless, this study identified a who found the diversity workbook “confusing”. While this student may be considered as a minority owing to lack of attention span, this comment coincides with Miller *et al.*'s (2004) study which suggests students would prefer to learn about diversity in depth as opposed to through limited tuition.

Conclusion

The vast majority of students responding positively to completing the diversity workbook informs this project that diversity exercises can aid student cohesion amongst multicultural societies to create a comfortable learning environment. This was particularly substantiated by improved concentration when students were completing the exercise. This study's results also suggest social science students respond effectively to exercises where inclusivity is focused upon to supply the student with a competitive advantage; particularly relevant to the international customer facing nature of their chosen profession (Rivera & Lee, 2016; Casado, 2007; Madera, 2011). This positive outlook towards inclusivity has the potential to allow students to discover fruitful discussion; enticing improved student attendance. This study's findings coincide with Devine *et al.*'s. (2007) study whereby there is a requirement to receive in-depth tuition related to diversity which shall aim to deter stereotyping diminishing the discussion of cultural identity. Therefore, a viable strategy to adopt could be associated with diversity being introduced with a flipped learning activity (Laurillard 2012); developing a more truthful student voice (Madera 2011).

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